

MINUTES
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Commission Conference Call Meeting
1420 East 6th Avenue – Helena Headquarters
Helena, MT 59620
JULY 26, 2007

Commission Members Present: Steve Doherty, Chairman; Shane Colton, Vice-Chairman; Vic Workman; Dan Vermillion; Willie Doll.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Larry Peterman, Acting Director; Jim Kropp, Becky Dockter; Tom Palmer, Quentin Kujala, Mike Korn; Regena Peterson; Jessica Snyder.

Press Present: Sara Cook, Associated Press.

Topics of Discussion:

- 1. Opening – Call to Order**
- 2. Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area Meriweather Fire - River Closure**

1. Call to Order. Chairman Doherty called the conference call meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area Meriweather Fire - River Closure. Larry Peterman, FWP Chief of Field Operations and Acting Director, explained that due to intense fire conditions in the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area, the Helena District Forest Service is requesting an emergency closure to public use in the affected area of the Missouri River for safety concerns. Helicopters will be retrieving water from the river, and other fire suppression efforts will be occurring in the area as well. This type of recreational closure has been done in the past, once at Alberton Gorge, and once at Placid Lake. The waters are reopened once conditions improve and public safety is no longer an issue. Commission action is necessary to close waters to recreational use.

The canyon of the Gates of the Mountains is narrow and restricted, and full of smoke. The Forest Service has asked that the river be closed to all recreational use from American Bar on the upper end of Holter Lake through the Gates of the Mountains canyon to Beartooth Landing, approximately 7 river miles.

Peterman said the Department is requesting that the Commission delegate authority to the FWP Director and the District Commissioner to close, and subsequently reopen when conditions warrant, the Missouri River from American Bar to Beartooth Landing.

Peterman said this fire is very active. More fire fighting resources are on the way, however resources are scant at this time.

Action: Colton moved and Workman seconded the motion to delegate authority to the FWP Director and the District Commissioner to close, and subsequently reopen, the Missouri River from American Bar to Beartooth Landing. Motion carried.

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Commissioner Doll stated that he has a suggestion for a possible solution to the overcrowding issue related to the unlimited archery problem in the Missouri Breaks. He is attending a sportsmen's working group meeting in Malta on Tuesday night of next week, and wanted input from the rest of the Commissioners before presenting this proposal at that meeting.

He proposes that the unlimited archery area in the Breaks be antlerless and spike bulls only, and offer a limited number of either sex permits in each area.

Colton said a similar proposal was entertained in October of 2006 at the meeting in Miles City. He agreed the Breaks may have to become a permit area. It will take a great deal of discussion and several public hearings to involve all interested parties. Changes cannot be made until the biennial season setting process is underway. Colton charged the Department to look into what the public sentiment is, and provide that information so the Commission can determine where to go from this point.

Doll said he will bring the subject up at the sportsmen's meeting next week and bring back the results at the August 2 Commission meeting. It will be a controversial issue, specifically with outfitters.

*Action: Colton moved and Workman seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion carried.*

The conference call meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

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**Steve Doherty, Chairman**

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**Larry Peterman, Acting Director**